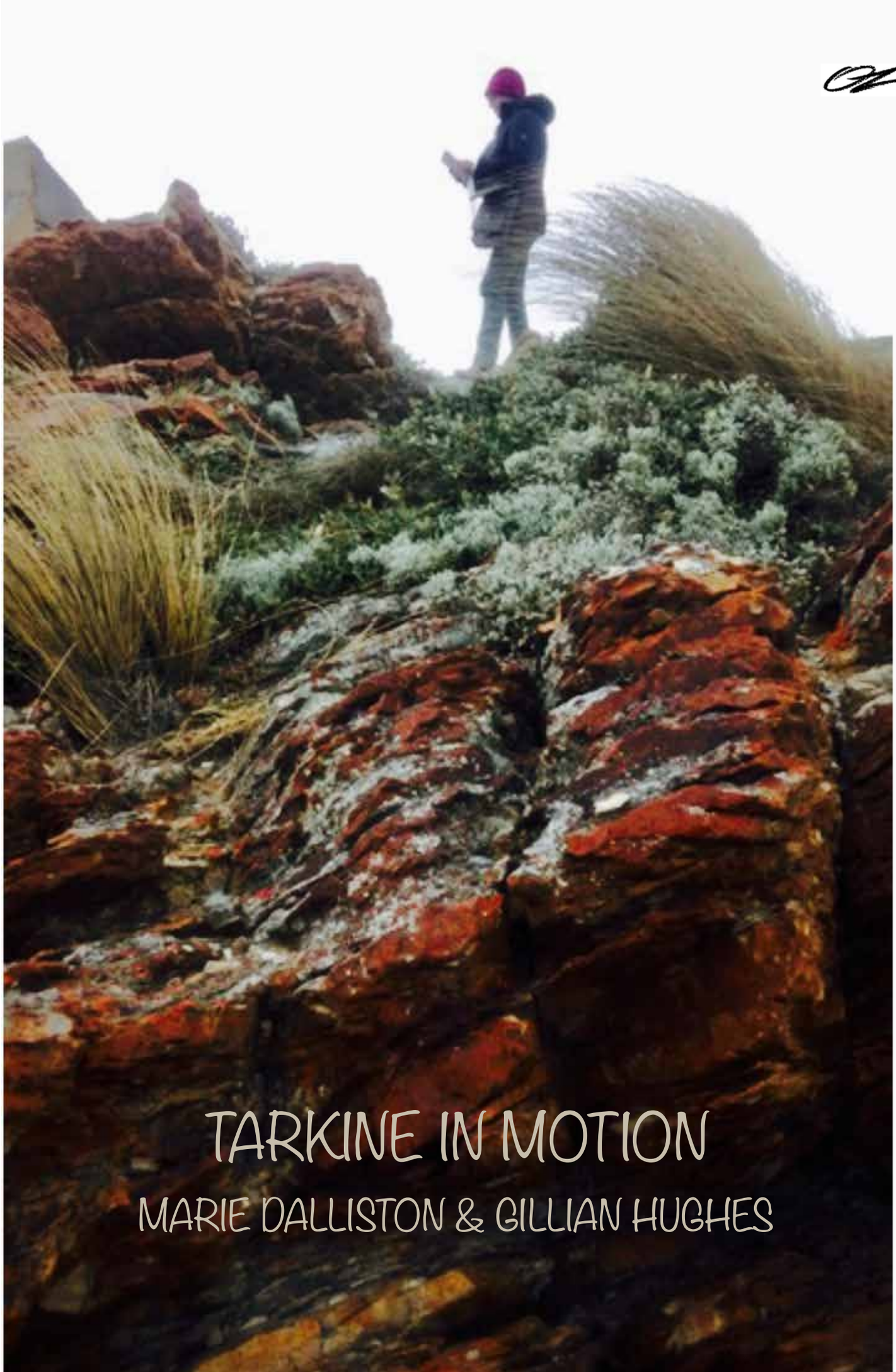


TARKINE IN MOTION

MARIE DALLISTON & GILLIAN HUGHES

Photo Marie Dalliston

Marie Dalliston: Waterfall, November 2017,
pure pigment on canvas, 121x118x5cm

A cacophony of fluid decibels
micro cloud fine mists floating
falling confetti sunlit spectrum

Takayna is the Aboriginal name for the north west region of Tasmania where in 2017 the Bob Brown Foundation held an environmental conservation arts project called Tarkine in Motion. For 72 hours in April 2017, 120 artists experienced an extraordinary immersion.

'Tarkine In Motion is a collaborative artistic endeavour. It is all about creating and maintaining momentum in order to make takayna/Tarkine a national park and world heritage area under the custodianship of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.
By taking inspiration from this place and interpreting their thoughts and feelings in their chosen field, artists have a unique ability to cross cultural and societal divides, to tell the stories of the land without being compromised by the pursuit of the almighty dollar, or the vote....
The results will come together in any number of forms, exhibitions, performances, films, books, who knows... we will work with the Bob Brown Foundation in their efforts to have vast swathes of this special place protected from mining, forestry and those that disrespect the natural and cultural landscape.
This group is a place to discuss, meet and connect with others who share this vision. A hive mind of creativity and hope.' (Dan Broun, Bob Brown Foundation)

MARIE DALLISTON

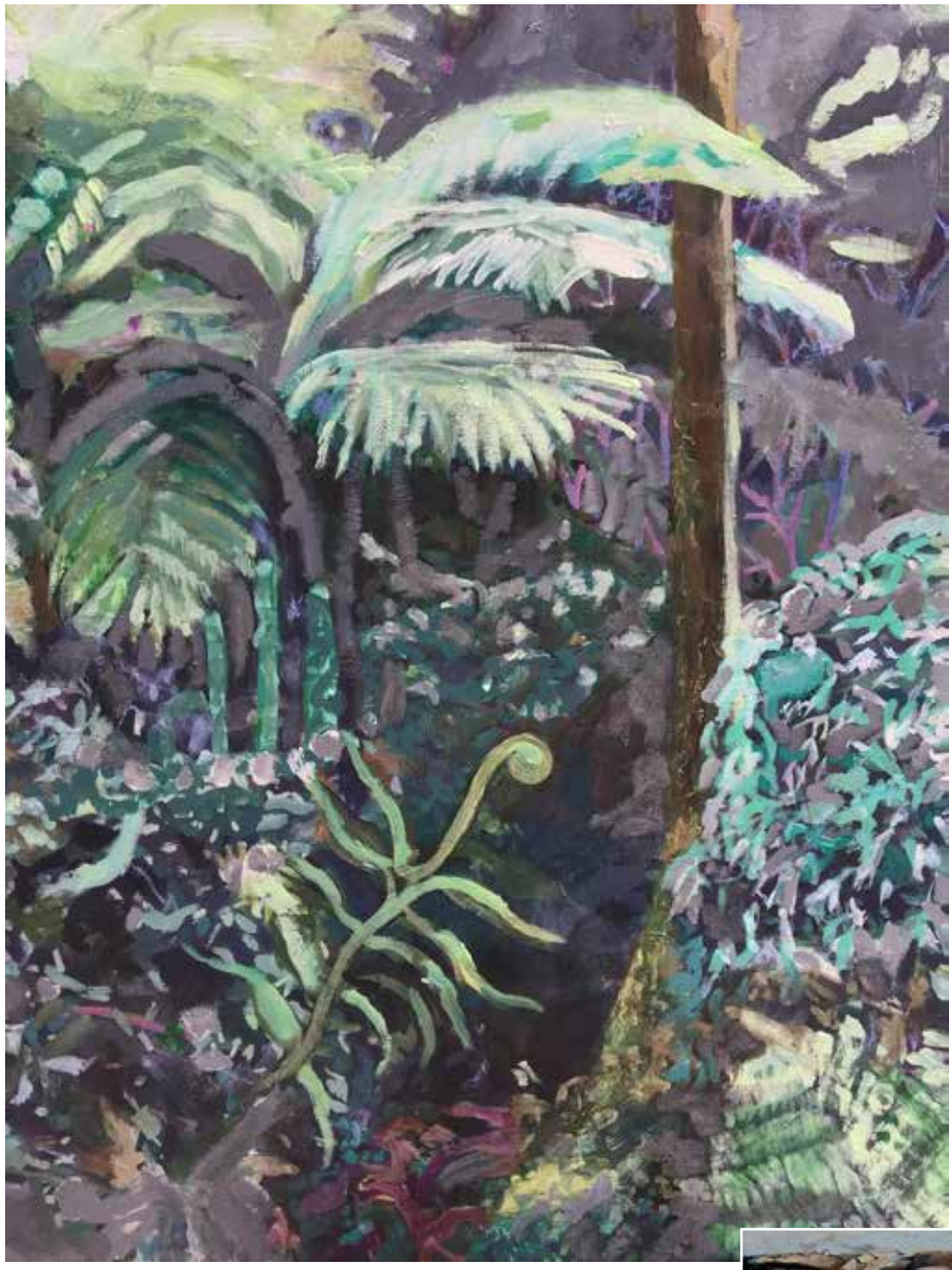
was one of these participating artists.

I was in the Tarkine for only five days and yet it was only later that I would realise just how intense this experience would be for me.

I have travelled all over the world to wellknown metropolitan cities and spent many hours in the famous museums and galleries gazing at the old masters. I have experienced Japanese traditional architecture, gazed skywards at the cathedrals of Rome, stood and wondered at the past history of the Acropolis in Athens. As with most young art students, this exploration was in my youth, but until Tarkine I had never been to the wilderness, the undisturbed nature.

Wilderness is wild land not changed significantly by human activity. It includes the most intact undisturbed,

This page:
Marie Dalliston with Tall Timbers 2017,
pure pigment on canvas, 62x105x4cm
Wild growth of trees
see the wind-shaped years
holding ground together



truly wild places not controlled or developed by humans.

Nevertheless, the mere presence or activity of people does not disqualify an area from being wilderness. Many ecosystems that are, or have been, inhabited or influenced by activities of people may still be considered wild. This way of looking at wilderness permits the inclusion of areas within which natural processes operate without human interference.

As a visual artist I found my sight was gorging on the untamed, complex patterns, shapes, colours and textures of the living and the non living elements before me as I sat quietly and soaked it in with all my senses.

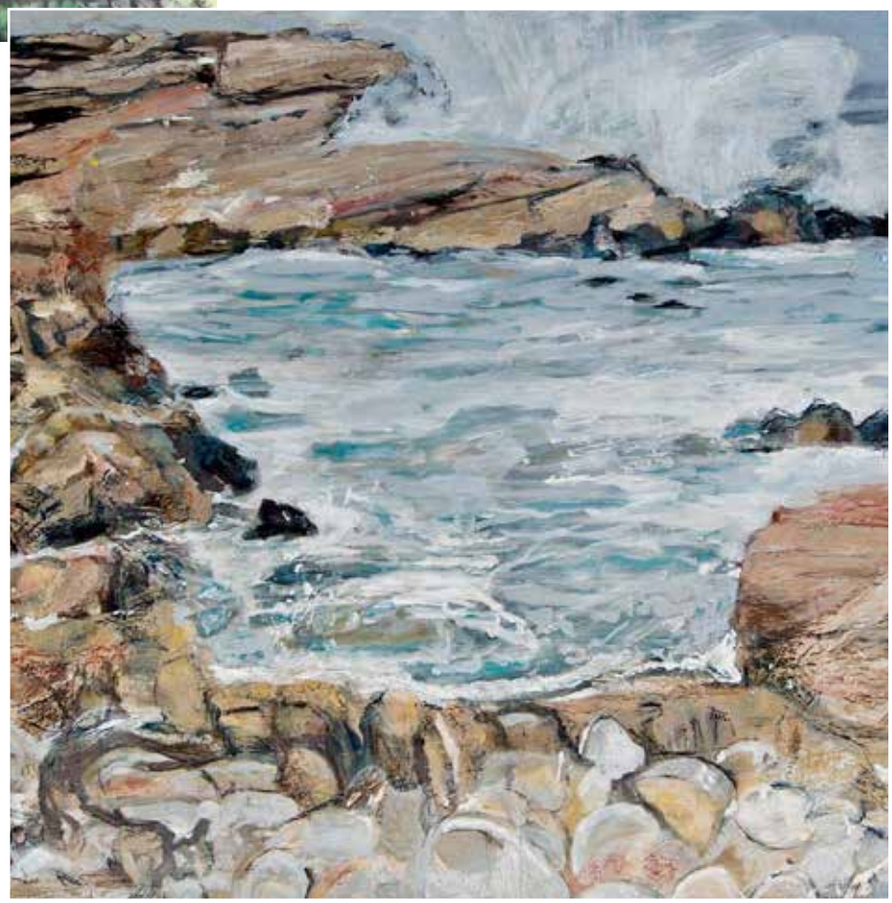
My practice is to start slowly in place with a few exercises that help me understand what I'm interpreting. I jot down words on my sketch pad to help me describe the landscape, such as 'dripping drops of water from the morning dew' and 'sparkling shafts of sunlight'.

These quick artist's notes made while present in place and time, help me later to conjure up the essence of the experience when I'm back in my studio and faced with a freshly stretched white blank canvas. I also like to write three-line Haiku poems to accompany each of my paintings.

My wild Tarkine country landscapes have the physical manifestations and formations of the natural elements of life forces, whether at the mouth of the Arthur River which carries the natural erosion of fallen dead trees out to sea or the ethereal temporate rainforest ecosystems of fungi, mosses and delicate tree fern spores, and so much more.

Over eons of time, the bygone repetition of natural cycles are uniquely distinguished from the delicate nuances of micro climates. The undisturbed and evolved perfection brought about by living in place, in time and in harmony - all of these different patterns are so varied and glorious, each with its own identity and forming a diverse landscape.

As I sit quietly writing now I realise how privileged I have been to be involved in such a program doing what I love and being for a short time part of the wilderness.



Opposite: page top:

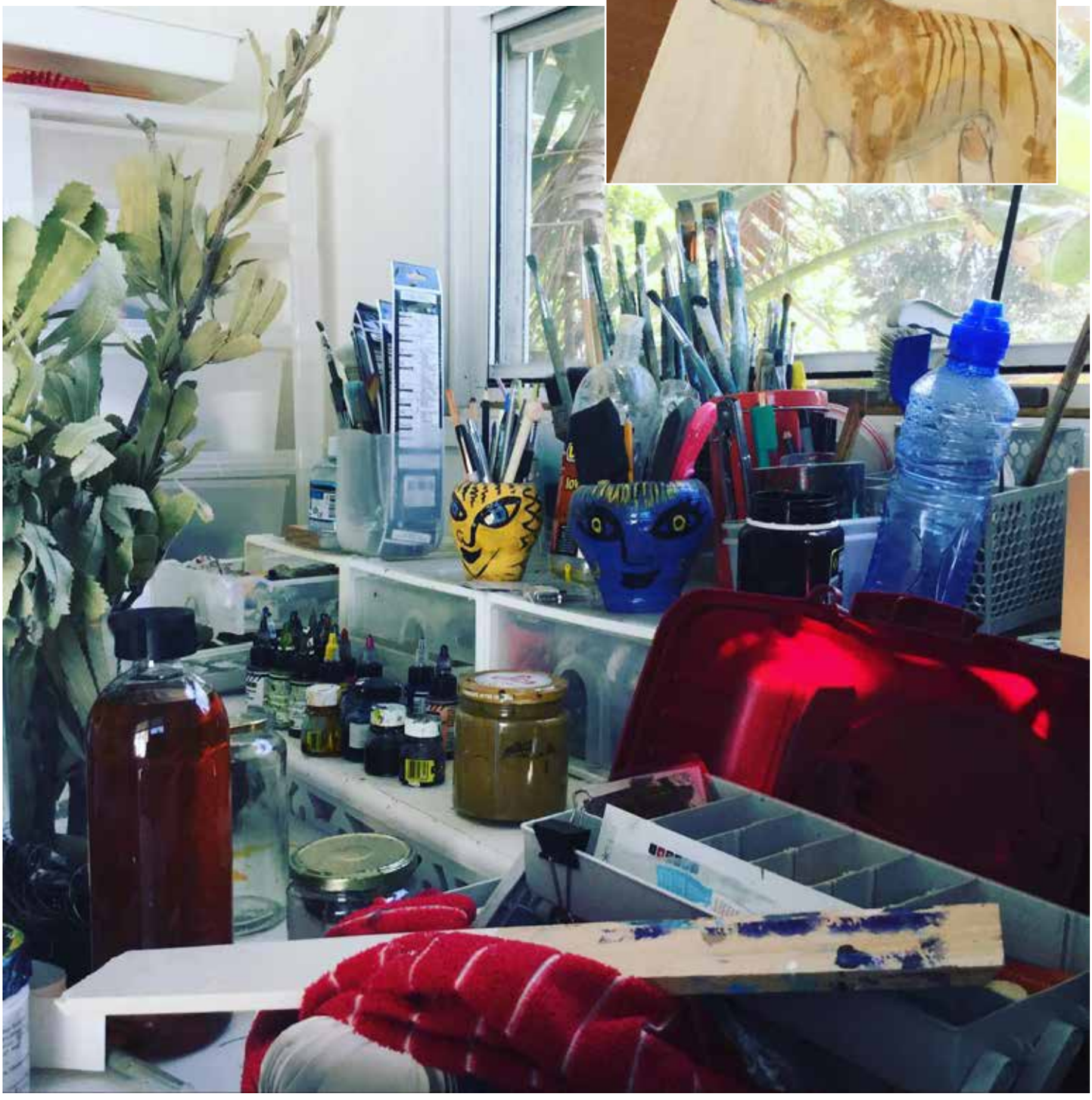
Marie Dalliston: 'Ancient Lands'
As I sit upon the verdant plush
this cool living remnant,
tree ferns reach towards the light
all within this wildness.

Leaf litter left undisturbed
a century of seasons
creates the growth geometry
of the future

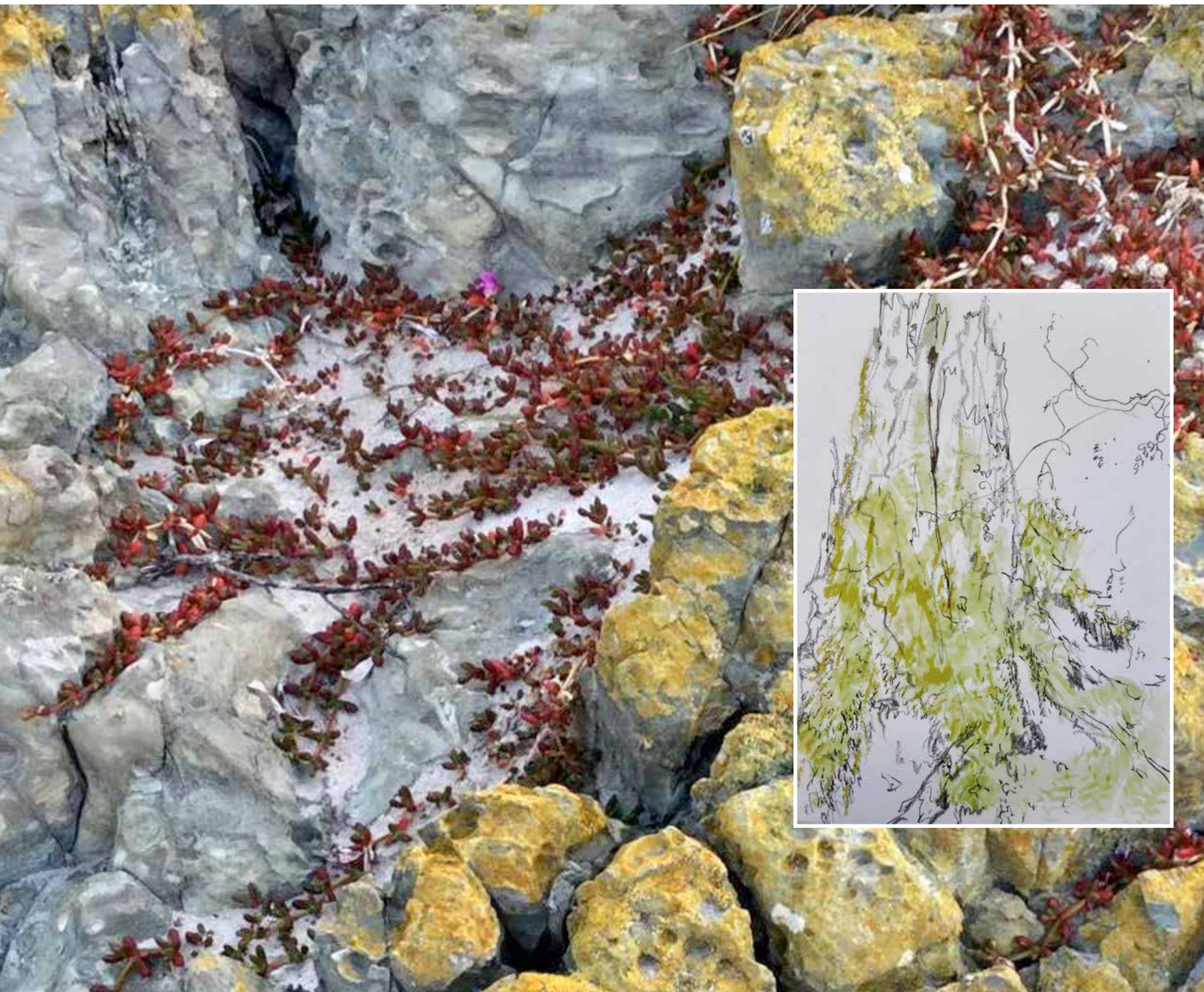
Opposite below:

Marie Dalliston: 'The Kings Run'
The Kings Run returned
back to the rightful owners
tradition lives on once again

This page: Marie Dalliston, In the studio



Bass Strait
Flinders Island
Hunter Island
Cape Barren Island
North West
North East
North
North Midlands
Ben Lomond
Big River
Oyster Bay
South West
South East
Tasman Peninsula
Bruny Island



GILLIAN HUGHES

The Tarkine consists of 477,000 hectares of temperate rainforest just inland from the rugged north west coast of Tasmania. Over 3 days, 120 artists from various disciplines including painting, drawing, photography, writing, poetry, song writing, music and performance created works which would assist the Bob Brown Foundation in raising awareness of this sensitive region as it faces pressure from mining, logging and the increase of recreational vehicle activity along the beaches.

Marie Dalliston and I were located at Arthur River, very close to a coastal enclave called the *Edge of the World*. This rugged and wild landscape is battered by the Roaring 40s winds which blow relentlessly across the Southern Ocean. This is also close to some of the most magnificent rainforest in the Southern Hemisphere.

Opposite page:: Tarkine artists (photos Marie Dalliston)
Opposite and this page
Gillian Hughes:
Plein Air Sketches 2017

This page: Gillian Hughes: Edge of the World, oil on board, 40x70cm
High Tide, Bluff Hill Point, oil on board, 40x70cm
Opposite: Bluff Hill Evening, oil on linen, 30x30cm

We were encouraged to diarise our experiences of the area and submit entries for an artist's journal. Here are excerpts from my diary entries describing the Arthur River area and the rainforest region:

Friday 14th April – Edge of the World
I was enjoying exploring the beach area at Edge of the World near Arthur River, when beyond the rocks, I spotted a cluster of wading birds on the beach. They were foraging in the sand and amongst them, were a couple of Oystercatchers. These birds are quite striking with their black and white plumage and red beaks. I walked over to get a closer look with a view to sketching them, when suddenly from around the bend some people on quad bikes appeared.

What horror! – the convoy of noise roared across the beach, seemingly oblivious to the signs informing us of the sensitive nesting sites. They left a long trail of deep tread marks in the sand on what was otherwise a pristine beach now devoid of the Oystercatchers and any of the other birds for that matter!

Rainforest Walk Through the Balfour Track,
oil on canvas 110xm c 110cm

Left: Gillian Hughes

I was left bewildered and quite angry with these people who believe they are 'entitled to their fun'; also at the irony of the signs, which can only be seen when standing in front of them! Where are the voices for the birds who are just as entitled to a protected and safe nesting site? But this experience has given me some insight into the conflicting interests surrounding the tourist industry and its impact on the environment. This is one of many examples of the need for the region to be elevated to the status of World Heritage Area – for the sake of the Oystercatchers!

Sunday 16th April – Balfour Track

After exploring the coastal area around Arthur River, Marie and I wanted to see the green of the rainforest area, which is only about 40km inland. A small and insignificant sign on the roadside marks the track. As I had my drawing kit with me, I was glad to discover that within a few metres of the track starting, I became completely immersed in a rainforest. It had everything – mosses, lichen, ferns, fungi, tangled tree roots and large draping vines.

In the darkness of the soft, damp forest floor, colours seemed much more saturated and that ubiquitous filtered light drifting through the enormous tree ferns highlighted a seemingly endless variety of greens (quite overwhelming for a painter!). As the track became less defined and very disorientating, we decided, in the interest of keeping any potential search party redundant for the weekend, to turn back and return to where we started. After all, we had all we needed to do some sketches. I set about trying to capture what was important to describe this rainforest – not an easy task with such an overload of information. One could sit for days doing tonal studies, line drawings, compositional studies and so on but as we only had a few hours, I decided to just get drawing in my usual 'look and put' process. In other words, drawing what I see without overthinking it too much. These are a few of the sketches I made on site. On return to the studio, I will attempt to describe the rainforest with paint using my original sketches.

On return to Sydney, I worked on several paintings for an exhibition which was held at Gallery One88 in Katoomba. I wanted to help raise awareness through my art to the plight of this region. The exhibition was named 'Edge of the World' as it reflected not only the actual place depicted in the paintings but also held metaphorical links to the environmental concerns that we were trying to highlight. People who care about trees and the environment are often seen as being on the fringe of society, in a different world to that of an ever-growing global commercialisation. The exhibition therefore, paid homage to all those people who literally 'sit in trees' to try to save these majestic giants from the claws of the logging machinery.

Gillian Hughes: Tarkine After Fire, oil on board 70x68cm

Gillian Hughes: Rainforest Understory, oil on board, 20x20cm

DIANA LEVY and SOFIA SABBAGH

Another participant in the Tarkine in Motion gathering was writer and poet Diana Levy. Participants were given a choice of river, coast or forest as a destination. Diana chose river and spent several weeks prior to the Easter camp in Waratah where the timber company Gunns once owned great plantations of a hybrid eucalypt, the nitin.

'I was aware that their preparation for this monoculture was to bulldoze great swathes of native timbers (which are now highly prized) and burn them. I was outdoors a lot and I asked my buddy, what was all the smoke drifting about for days on end? Surely there are no bushfires in autumn?

clear afternoon
the smoke of old growth burning
has blown away

As we drove towards our camp at the Frankland river, we saw that it was the smoke from the very forests we are trying to protect. This haiku became the first of the series in the haiga (illustrated haiku) series which I made in collaboration with Sofia Sabbagh.

It was good to be acclimatised to the cold temperatures in the forest. The campfire was the magnet that drew my fellow camper artists in the morning, the afternoon and at night. I would thoroughly immerse myself in this place.

pressing my nose
against myrtle's moss -
Maori greeting

In the hongi of New Zealand (where I am from) the ha, or breath of life, is exchanged. And these myrtles are hundreds of years old. What desecration, to allow a Malaysian company, Ta Ann, to turn them into woodchips!

While I was wandering about writing haiku, Sofia experimented with leaves and berries and making prints of them using simple materials. She then painted on them in watercolours. The essence of the Tarkine in Motion is collaboration and so we pooled our talents. Our guide at the camp, Jeff, took us to the river several times, and it was the girls who were the first to brave the freezing waters: In!

On our last visit, we saw the eagles who are the defence against logging. For the six months of the year that they are mating and rearing chicks, no human activity may disturb them.

circles in the sky
wedge-tailed eagles
watch us watch them

Sofia and I chose the best combination of print and haiku to make a series of three for exhibition at the Long Gallery at Salamanca, Hobart. They are print and paint on canvas, with a bamboo hanger through each, to be sold individually or as a series. The exhibition ran for ten days in February this year and was a great success with at least 2,500 people looking at the Tarkine through the eyes of the artists. It raised consciousness and also money.

A concert in the gallery was organised, the Tarkine in music and words, and my poem 'Frankland River forest - 41A & B' was one of the works read. This is the second time a concert has been held, and it has been significant in including Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

At the first concert in 2015, the mob decided to give permission for their language *palawa kani* to be included. They performed their song Singing Country Strong in this language, and they 'invited us to come onto stage and sing in harmonies', said Philip Harrington (organiser of the 2018 concert). This is significant, because part of the Bob Brown Foundation's aim is to hand back custodianship of takayna/Tarkine to the indigenous people.

It was wonderful to really deeply sink into the beautiful and threatened Tarkine, and just to write. The support around us was well-organised and the general feeling of all the activities I've been involved in, has been one of celebration of a unique place, rather than anger at the decisions of myopic authorities. It is one part of a larger campaign, and I hope, dear reader, you will go and visit this place. You'll be blown away!'

Diana Levy at Gallery One88 (photo Marie Dalliston)

circles in the sky
orange-tailed eagles
watch us watch them
pressing my nose
into myrtle's moss—
Maori greeting
clear afternoon
the smoke of old growth burning
has blown away